

The President's Daily Brief

8 December 1969

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Syria's release of the two Israeli hijacking victims removes a major factor inhibiting Israeli retaliation against Syria and Egypt. (Page 1)

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The Soviets
 (Page 3)

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In Colombia, the two major parties have agreed on a National Front candidate in next year's presidential elections. (Page 3)

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ISRAEL - ARAB STATES

Syria's release of the two Israeli passengers held in Damascus since the TWA hijacking last August removes a major factor inhibiting Israeli retaliation against Syria and Egypt. The release as finally worked out involved a three-sided swap of the two passengers held in Damascus and two Israeli pilots held by Egypt for 58 Egyptian and 13 Syrian prisoners held by Israel.

Israel has several scores to settle, especially with Egypt. There have been several Egyptian attacks on Israeli forces this fall, the most galling on 16 November when Egyptian frogmen attacked two Israeli merchant ships in the Port of Elat.

Israel continues to pound Egyptian positions along the canal daily, but has not carried out any major action there since early September. The temptation to hit Egypt before the Arab summit meeting set for 20 December will now be stronger.

If the Israelis should attempt ground operations directly across the canal, they would probably run the risk of heavy casualties.

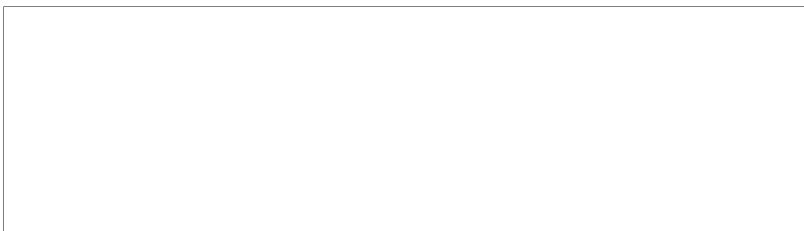
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JAPAN-USSR



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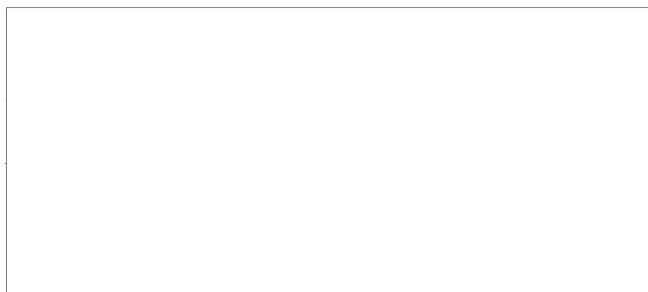
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NOTES

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Colombia: The two major parties have finally agreed on a National Front candidate--Misael Pastrana--in next April's presidential elections, after earlier failure to get together (see The President's Daily Brief of 13 November). For the first time since the Front system was established in 1958, however, the election outcome is uncertain. Ex-dictator Rojas Pinilla, currently without regular party connections, will be a contender. There probably will be other candidates from the disaffected ranks of the major parties, where political infighting over the selection of Pastrana has left bad feeling.

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